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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a systematic approach to long-range planning in colleges and universities. It deals first with the planning process and the seven objectives for planning. These are: (1) determination of the mission and goals of the college or university; (2) translation of the mission and goals into programs; (3) determination of the resources required for each program; (4) synthesis of programs and resource requirements into a flexible and practical plan; (5) mandatory review of the program on a regular basis; (6) development of a data base to facilitate internal management and budgeting; and (7) provision of a basis for fund-raising. The second part deals with the organization for planning and the need for: (1) a planning officer; (2) a planning committee; (3) program task forces; and (4) an information system. Financial information for projections of operating and capital resources is to be provided by the appropriate business and financial administrators and the operating units, the divisions, schools, departments, and service offices must become involved in providing input to the program task forces. (AF)

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Long-range planning for colleges and universities is a complex and important area that is difficult to deal with satisfactorily both in concept and in actual practice. Little wonder then that it is still not done, or is done poorly, by many of our institutions of higher education. Too often we find cases in which colleges and universities have reacted to internal and external influences and, in the absence of carefully developed plans, have dissipated scarce human, financial and physical resources unwisely or unnecessarily. With the objectives of promoting more attention for the need for sound planning and of contributing somewhat to the understanding of the planning process, this paper sets forth several principles for long-range planning in colleges and universities.

In preface, perhaps we might agree that among the most important elements of planning are:

- Establishing goals and objectives, both in broad terms and then more specifically within those parameters

- Designing the programs needed to accomplish objectives and reach goals

- Ensuring the actual benefits - in costs and other terms - to be derived from achievement of goals

- Reviewing and modifying plans to fit the changing social and educational environment

- Involving, to the greatest extent practical, the people who are directly concerned in formulating plans for their areas.

Too often, it seems, we become overly fascinated with the tools and mechanics of planning, and thus may not give adequate attention to the elements listed above. For discussion purposes, these elements may be embraced in the categories of The Planning Process and Organization For Planning.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The overall purpose of long-range planning is the development, maintenance, and operation of high-quality educational programs which have vital significance to a college or university. To achieve this purpose, specific, operationally related statements of objectives, and of the consequences expected from planning, are needed to determine what the programs should be, whom they should serve, what they will cost, and how they relate to other educational programs in the institution. Thus, seven objectives for planning emerge, as follows:

- Determination of the mission and goals of the college or university
- Translation of the mission and goals into programs
- Determination of the resources required for each program
- Synthesis of programs and resource requirements into a flexible and practical plan
- Mandatory review of programs on a regular basis
- Development of a data base to facilitate internal management and budgeting
- Provision of a basis for fund-raising.

These seven objectives are not necessarily given in order of importance or in order of accomplishment. They all interlock in the iterative process through which a long-range plan is developed. Accomplishment of each objective in itself yields ancillary benefits to the college or university because the continuing process of planning has value as a method of self-improvement, in addition to its importance as a means of generating a long-range plan. It is or will become obvious that no single objective is independent of the others. Through a cyclical planning process, with feedback and review as planning is refined and made more effective, successive levels of clarification will be reached regarding the institutional mission, the kinds of students to be served, the kinds of programs that can be supported, and an ordering of priorities.

Determination Of The Mission And Goals Of The College Or University

A college or university does not enjoy total freedom to determine what it can or will do. It must consider a number of factors, many of which may be largely beyond its control. The development of a realistic long-range plan must take into account the availability of students, their special needs and interests, a realistic assessment of financial resources, the plans of other institutions, and other related factors.

Social trends and developments and the educational emphases of society will help in determining priorities of need for professionals in various fields and for new and revised areas of specialized study. Such factors can most effectively and constructively be taken into consideration during the process of long-range planning. They will materially affect decisions on specific statements of goals and on the setting of priorities for programs.

More importantly, the process of planning provides a mechanism for making effective use of the special insight and knowledge of the faculty and of academic administrators. These people are responsible for determining the substantive nature of the programs that collectively enable a college or university to fulfill its mission and its responsibilities. First, however, the college or university must determine its overall mission and set broad goals for the future.

Translation Of The Mission And Goals Into Programs

Although factors both inside and outside the institution will contribute to the generation of precise statements on its mission, it is largely an internal responsibility to identify the programs needed to achieve the ends agreed upon. New instructional programs may be required, while others may have to be eliminated in order to free funds for more important activities. Changes in emphasis for research may be needed to reflect a variety of educational, economic and social concerns. New ways of providing support services may have to be developed to optimize the use of funds and other resources. Success in implementing programs is closely related to the extent to which programs are clearly defined and realistically related to all of the resources required.

Generally, programs are the major educational activities of a campus, including the operations outside the classroom that are needed to establish a good learning and living environment on campus. For example, the following would be considered programs for the purposes of long-range planning:

- A sequence of courses or other activities open to undergraduates to develop competency in a field of study such as chemistry, history or modern languages, generally referred to as a major in the field

- The collection of courses or other activities determined to be necessary to meet the minimal requirements for a baccalaureate or an associate degree

- A series of achievements through study or research designated as requirements for a master's degree in a given field

- A set of activities, short courses, correspondence work and the like, provided on or off campus, to enable professionals in a given field such as medicine or electrical engineering to update their competencies

- Special research, organized around a problem area such as urban transportation, that might require multidisciplinary talent and special facilities

- The research facilities, courses of instruction, library resources, and faculty needed for effective offering of a doctoral degree

- The facilities, funds and staff needed to provide for recreation and other nonacademic student activities that help determine the quality of the campus environment.

All programs should have a definable relationship to the mission of the college or university.

Determination Of The Resources Required For Each Program

This is a key objective in the process of long-range planning. If it is skillfully approached and conducted, the planning process can move with relative smoothness and lead to a useful plan within a realistic time span. If the determination of resource requirements is attempted with the same detail and exactitude needed for preparation of an annual operating budget, inordinate delays may ensue and the whole process may be impeded. On the other hand, if projections of resource requirements are unrealistically high or low, in an attempt to simplify the procedure, the plan will lose credibility.

Guidelines for planning must include procedures for supplying the individuals and units involved in the planning of programs with general indices for use in determining requirements for funds and other resources on the basis of experience. For example: acceptable student/faculty ratios may be used to determine how many instructional staff are needed for a projected number of students; the average or accepted sizes of faculty offices for professors, by rank, may be

used to project space needs for such personnel; volumes of books in the library for a particular field of study can be projected on a per student basis, or by standards established by national professional groups; and acceptable ratios of secretarial and other support staff to instructional staff can facilitate adequate projection of the future need for such personnel. Comparable indices or factors should be provided where possible to aid determination of all the resources that combine to make a program possible.

A deliberate distinction must be made here between the process of budgeting for the next year and the process of projecting resource requirements by program over a number of years. There is obviously a very close relationship. The figures arrived at in compiling an annual budget should closely resemble the near-term projections of the long-range plan, if the plan is well conceived. Annual reviews of the long-range plan, with refinements from additional data and experience, should provide near-term projections that become steadily more realistic and feasible.

Synthesis Of Programs And Resource Requirements Into A Flexible And Practical Plan

The major objective of planning is, of course, the development of a plan - a guide to future actions for the institution. Financial and other implications come into sharper focus when the various parts of the plan, as developed by the individual units engaged in planning, are consolidated into a master plan. Trade-offs will have to be made. Consideration may have to be given to phasing the development of programs to comply with constraints and limitations on resources. Some new programs may have to be temporarily or permanently abandoned.

Projections of capital needs, by year and by program, will help eliminate the opportunism so often associated with the physical planning of campuses. Furthermore, it may be necessary to clarify some of the policies used in making projections for planning - for instance, the policies assumed for student admissions, faculty salaries, class sizes, class schedules through the day and week, or student aid programs.

Attempts to synthesize the parts into a plan will inevitably raise questions that must be fed back to the planning units. Revisions, adjustments, and additions to background information and to elements of the plan will be necessary. A practical limit must be placed on the time allowed for such adjustments, and on the level of detail or refinement desired. The resulting plan should be viewed as a reasonably firm guide for operations, but with sufficient flexibility to accommodate changes based on experience through the years.

Mandatory Review Of Programs On A Regular Basis

An endemic disease of the academic world is the perpetuation of courses, research programs and committees long after they have ceased to have the importance or pertinence they may have had when they were established. Faculty mobility, changing patterns of funding, declining student interest and other factors contribute to such decay. Too often a research group struggles to sustain itself long after the initial impetus for the work has vanished. Courses may be carried in the catalogs, and still offered to a few students by a professor encouraged to take on what to him may be a peripheral subject, long after the faculty member who started the course has departed. Entire programs may fall in the same category; rarely is the start of a new program accompanied by a requirement for automatic dissolution unless its continuation is authorized by a subsequent action based on detailed review. One might suggest that a "self-destruct" mechanism may be in order for some programs.

An important objective of long-range planning is the incorporation of a provision for mandatory review of existing programs. Each continuing program should be scrutinized as carefully as a proposal for a new program. Is student interest lagging? Are qualified and interested faculty still available? Have sources of funding begun to dry up? Are the graduates of the program really being prepared for the kinds of work currently available? Has technology made the direction previously taken by a research institute much less significant or even obsolete?

If a program has become only marginally important or if it can no longer be supported adequately, it should be phased out and its resources allocated to activities that are currently more significant.

Development Of A Data Base To Facilitate Internal Management And Budgeting

If an institution has a sophisticated and fully operational management information system, the processes of program budgeting and long-range planning can be greatly expedited. Indeed, it is almost impossible to develop any one of these three systems independently; work toward the development of any one inevitably will lead to the implementation of some elements of the other two systems.

An institution should not wait to begin long-range planning until it is satisfied it has all of the information that it needs, at the desired level of reliability. The process of long-range planning will lead to improvements in the kind of information collected and the process by which it is acquired and analyzed. Similarly, the adoption of an approach to planning in terms of programs should not be delayed until a detailed program budgeting system has been installed.

Nevertheless, it is strongly suggested that early attention should be given to the establishment of an office that would have responsibility for gathering and analyzing essential information. This office should be responsible for compiling and providing the raw data needed by the planning units of the college or university.

Reliable information, organized to be readily accessible and providing internal consistency in its substance, is indispensable for sound planning and budgeting.

Several computer-based models have been developed for university planning and have been used with varying degrees of success. However, a model developed for the specific use of one institution will very probably require considerable change to be adopted for use by another institution. In any application of computer models for planning, the model should be altered to fit the institution; the institution should not be reshaped or restructured to fit an existing model. Although computers and computer-based planning models can facilitate the work required to make planning projections involving inter-dependent variables and alternative courses of action, a college or university should not defer planning until these tools are acquired and perfected.

Provision Of A Basis For Fund-Raising

Any experienced fund-raiser knows that he needs a good product to sell. For an educational institution, this means that he must be able to identify clearly what the requested funds would be used for. These and related questions can be answered readily if the institution has developed a credible long-range plan. Programs that might appeal to a particular prospective donor can be singled out, projections of potential future needs can be made realistically, and relationships with existing programs can be identified.

It is particularly important that a clearly formulated long-range plan will lessen the danger of being unduly influenced by the whim of a donor who has his own ideas about programs he wants to support. The acceptance of funds for new and perhaps unjustified activities, in the absence of a coherent plan, has led many an institution into serious trouble. The acceptance of funds for capital development without accompanying endowments or other plans

for support has been known to place an intolerable burden on operating funds. In the effort to persuade a foundation to grant funds for the initial years of operating a new program, it is easy to overlook the ancillary resources needed at the outset, or the long-term commitments made in staffing a program with tenured professors without assurance of support in subsequent years.

Long-range planning, in which faculty and staff participate, not only facilitates successful fund-raising but also helps ensure that no new problems will be raised along with the funds.

ORGANIZATION FOR PLANNING

The recommended approach to planning encourages the involvement of the administrative and operating units to the maximum practical extent. In this way, unneeded duplication of structure is avoided and the operating units that must be responsible for implementation will be directly involved in the initial planning.

It must be emphasized, however, that an approach to planning must be much more thorough than merely the collection of separate plans generated by individual operating units. All too often, this has been the extent of planning at colleges and universities, resulting in an incoherent collection of independent aspirations where realism is hard to find, coordination is almost impossible, and program planning and subsequent program budgeting cannot be achieved.

Sound planning requires leadership and initiative from the top, starting with the President and the backing of the governing body. Major leadership and direction for substantive planning in each unit or department should be the responsibility of the unit head. Directions for planning, establishing guidelines, and drafting statements of goals and objectives are generated at the top through various individuals and planning groups. Substantive input is thereafter provided, upon request, by appropriate operating units. At various levels, there should be meaningful involvement of students, faculty, and staff.

Planning Officer

Someone should be designated as Planning Officer. Depending on the size of the institution, this might be either a full-time or a part-time responsibility. A word of warning seems in order here. In too many instances, a busy academic or administrative officer is asked by a college or university President to assume the role of Planning Officer along with his full scale of regular duties. Such an arrangement is doomed to failure. The complexities of the

planning function demand that it receive adequate time and attention from the Planning Officer. If a part-time responsibility is involved, the person assigned to it should be relieved of enough of his regular duties to provide the time required for an effective planning effort.

The Planning Officer should have available to him adequate staff to assist him in his duties. He would coordinate all aspects of college or university planning for the President. He and his staff would prepare any materials needed for a Planning Committee. He would be responsible for ensuring that the inputs of any planning task forces and other planning groups are synthesized into a draft and then into a final version of the proposed institutionwide plan.

Planning Committee

The college or university should appoint a Planning Committee which would be broadly representative of faculty, staff, and students. The academic head of the institution should chair the committee and the Planning Officer or another individual should serve as secretary.

In broad terms, the responsibility of the Planning Committee would be to initially develop the rationale and the general sense of direction for planning for the college or university. It would translate the preliminary statement of mission into implications for the several units and departments. It would seek to develop statements of specific objectives that could form the base for program definition. It would review historical information concerning the institution, and endeavor to outline what the future of the institution should be. It would approve planning guidelines for units and departments, and the schedule by which planning would proceed. It would receive the inputs from planning units, and would discuss and develop the composite plan.

The Planning Committee should have reporting to it a number of Program Task Forces. Each Task Force should be chaired by a member of the Planning Committee, who would be accountable for the effectiveness of that Task Force. The Task Forces would, in turn, request and receive inputs from the operating units, such as schools and departments, and from other segments of the institution.

Program Task Forces

To ensure that planning is not simply a compilation of uncoordinated requests for funds from academic operating units and support services, major inputs for the Planning Committee would be prepared by Program Task Forces.

It is suggested that Task Forces be established for the following programs, as needed:

- Campus environment
- Baccalaureate degree programs
- Master's degree programs
- Professional degree programs
- Doctoral degree programs
- Continuing education programs
- Research programs.

Program Task Forces might also be established for:

- Two-year, baccalaureate preparatory programs
- Diploma and associate degree programs.

The membership of these Task Forces should cut across disciplinary lines, as well as include individuals with special experience or insight regarding the programs to be considered. These people will need to ask for, receive and exercise judgment in the analysis of information about objectives for programs under their jurisdiction. They will need to question the adequacy of generalized projections of the types of resources required for successful achievement of suggested program objectives. They will have to be alert to duplications of effort within the institution, as well as to gaps in plans.

Information System

In the process of planning, massive amounts of data on all aspects of a college or university are ingested. A systematic procedure for gathering such information is essential not only for effective planning but also for sound management. Someone should be given responsibility for developing, implementing and directing an effective information system. The person thus designated, and the organizational placement of the resulting information function, will vary from institution to institution. In some instances this has been successfully assigned as a responsibility of the Planning Officer. Regardless of the arrangement, the officer responsible for the information system should be charged with

responsibility for compiling and storing data as well as for analyzing information and disseminating it to operating units as needed. He and his staff would serve as the basic resource for the factual information needed in planning. Through his functional area, data would be gathered with which a profile of past campus activities could be constructed. Through his analysis of data gathered from within the institution, he would provide inputs to planning units for projecting the future.

Information On Financial Resources

The function of providing financial information for projections of operating and capital resources should be performed by the appropriate business and financial administrators. They and their staffs would provide the assistance needed in this area at the appropriate times during the planning process.

The long-range planning process is distinct from budgeting; it is not intended to produce detailed projections of resource requirements, and it will not lead to a detailed breakdown of all items as needed for budget preparation. Moreover, at the outset, planning should not be constrained by budgetary considerations which might inhibit development of approaches that depart from tradition. However, resource requirements expressed in terms of standards, norms or averages which are based on experience can serve as guides to planning, and the business officers and their staffs can provide these.

Operating Units

The operating units are the divisions, schools, departments, and service offices that are responsible for administering programs of instruction, research and support activities. They include such units as the athletic office, the student affairs office, the registrar's office and the academic units.

The academic operating units become involved in providing input to the Program Task Forces. How they prepare this input would depend upon the particular unit. In most instances, it would be preferable to involve staff, students and faculty in the process.

Other operating units, such as those concerned with student housing, student union, library, or buildings and grounds maintenance, would respond with inputs as requested, and should also involve staff, students, and faculty to the extent deemed appropriate.

SUMMARY

Planning in colleges and universities has sometimes led to disappointments and frustrations because too much was expected from it. Planning is not a precise science and will not reveal the future with pinpoint accuracy; nor is planning a panacea for all of the administrative and managerial shortcomings which often impair the operational effectiveness of an institution. However, conscientiously conceived and carefully prepared plans can minimize the number and degree of crisis situations which confront a college or university and can assist identification of desirable changes in objectives and programs. Also, plans aid and facilitate making and communicating sound and timely decisions at all levels in an institution.

A systematic approach to planning, as outlined in this paper, should substantially improve the chances of success. Above all, it would be wise to make certain that the planning process is implemented with a high regard for simplicity, flexibility and realism.